

AUSTRALIAN

UFO

BULLETIN



THE VICTORIAN U.F.O. RESEARCH SOCIETY

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The Bass Strait Flap. by Paul Norman

The Tasmanian UFO Research Centre (TUFOIC) and VUFORS are co-operating in a joint effort to fully investigate the Bass Strait UFO activity, which apparently reached a peak during that dramatic weekend of 21st October, when Pilot Frederick Valentich was reported missing after a UFO encounter in that area. As this issue goes to press reports are still coming in by mail and telephone. Several months may pass before the extent and meaning of this series of incidents will be known, if ever.

The Bass Strait Encounter attracted world wide interest, with VUFORS telephones engaged almost constantly day and night. Two months prior to this fateful event, UFO reports were coming from all over King Island and were being passed on to the police and King Island News. TUFOIC and VUFORS are in the process of investigating the origin and build-up of sightings beginning when a slow moving UFO was reported to be pacing motorists, then disappearing at low level over a nearby house.

At Maatsuyker Island, a large light hovered low to west of the island for nearly two hours, while power in the lighthouse keepers residence is reported to have failed. Erratically moving lights and day-light sightings were also being widely reported as far South as Hobart. These and other reports are currently being followed up by TUFOIC Investigators Keith Roberts, Paul Jackson and their associates.

On 21st October, at about 2.00 p.m., Mrs K.M. (Name in VUFORS files) was sunbaking in the back yard of her Currie, King Island home. The sky was very blue and clear, except for one large cloud directly overhead. Out of this cloud came an object similar to a huge golf ball. The object was white or silver in color and moved West toward the sea. It moved much slower than an aircraft. Mrs. M. described the size as twice that of a small plane, only the shape was round. She thought it most likely a satellite. However, it stopped at a 70deg. angle, then started moving back in the direction from whence it came. Mrs. M. watched for approximately ten minutes, then had to leave and saw no more of it and thought no more about it until the pilot story broke the next day. The witness estimated the cloud to be at about the same elevation as on 9th November, the day of the interview. I had noted while flying to King Island on that day, the clouds were at 5,000 feet.

Less than an hour after the King Island UFO was last seen, fourteen year old Mark L. was playing tennis with three others on courts near Geelong. Twelve other youths were playing on surrounding courts. When Mark leaned back to stretch his neck, he noticed twin cigar shape objects moving slowly from west to east. He called his team mates attention to the strange objects which were described as silvery in color and connected together with two silver pipes. The objects were moving slowly with no visible means of propulsion and no wings. The UFOs were first seen at an angle of 75deg. to the South-West. They were travelling much slower than light aircraft, taking approximately fifteen minutes to move to a 75deg. position in the South-East. The estimated size was given as slightly smaller than jumbo jets. VUFORS has since been contacted by members of a cricket team playing nearby at the same time but due to lack of time, they still have to be interviewed.

One hour after these twin UFOs were last seen, Mrs. G. of Geelong and her fourteen year old son were driving to their weekender on Cape Otway. The time was 4.15p.m., when a silver glint caught their eye. They looked up and saw two silver cigar shaped objects moving slowly from the South-West. Mrs G. at first thought the twin objects were gliders, but after noting they had no wings she stopped the car to step out for a better look. The UFOs remained in close formation, with one slightly behind the other. The observers were puzzled by the precision flying. The two cigar shaped UFOs maintained the same distance from each other during the entire period of observation. The size was estimated as about that of a light aircraft. If these were the same UFOs as reported near Geelong one hour earlier they were flying at a higher elevation and too high for any connections to be seen. Suddenly the two objects changed color to white, made a sweeping curve to the North and sped away at a jet like speed. The Mother and Son could hear no sound.

Shortly after 7.00 p.m., on that fatal Saturday evening, a Frankston widow, her fourteen year old son, sixteen year old daughter and their friend Janie, age sixteen, were motoring to a property near Baxter, when they noted a glowing object to the South-East. Their impression was of the exhaust of a sky rocket, although, the object was stationary. The sighting occurred just before darkness. The sky was clear. The color of the object appeared to be a mixture of red, pink and white. The five observers estimated its size as $\frac{1}{2}$ that of the Moon at a 30deg. angle. The viewers lost sight of the object when they turned onto Golf Link Road heading toward Baxter. The Mother said that at the time of sighting she did not realize it was a UFO, but found out later that other people had seen the same thing and had thought no more about it until news of missing pilot Valentich became known the following day. Further details with who made observations during this critical time between 7.00-7.30p.m. on that memorable day, will continue next issue.

Less than two hours after the pilots mysterious disappearance, two witnesses near Warrnambool, observed a light about 4 or 5 times the size of the evening star in the northeastern sky. The object was described as being orange-red in color and to be hovering at a height of about 75deg. angle. It remained stationary for several minutes, then suddenly changed color to yellow and moved rapidly to a 10deg. angle position in the South-East, where it again hovered for a few minutes before speeding away at a fast speed.

A number of people in the same vicinity reported hearing a strange sound at about 2.00 or 3.00p.m., next morning. The sound gave the impression that whatever the cause, it came from a very low level. The sound was similar to a semi-trailer but heard overhead instead of ground level (reminiscent of the Mildura reports 25-10-76) One woman lay in bed petrified, waiting for whatever it was to hit the house. Unfortunately, none of the people went outside to investigate.

Between 7.00-7.30p.m. on 21st October, other pilots were flying and listening to Pilot Valentich's final words. Somewhere-someone decided to tip the press. Thus, the world learned of that pilot's strange disappearance. Soon afterwards officials confirmed part of the story, releasing words spoken between pilot and Melbourne Flight Service and listing time when words were spoken. A VUFRS contact who was following the developments with keen interest, decided to time the transmission with a stop watch. Thus, Ufologists learned of the missing gaps and that the release was merely an edited version. It is said that Gido Valentich, is the only person outside officialdom to have listened to the tape recording of his son's last words. Perhaps sooner or later, more listeners will decide to speak up and make known to the outside world, the total dramatic description of the encounter with the unknown.

One of the first attempts to debunk the UFO came from a Department of Transport spokesman, "The pilot was flying upside down". This hastily presented "explanation" immediately backfired. The general public apparently knew more about Cessna aircraft than the D.O.T. spokesman, who must have forgotten that the fuel tanks were located in the overhead wings and that fuel feeds by gravity to the engine. Upside down flying in this type aircraft is limited to a brief 50 seconds.

With various theories following in rapid succession from officials and the press. There was a time when Ufologists were finding it difficult to determine who was trying to fool whom. That is, who was the hoaxer, the pilot or the officials? Was the incident a deliberate hoax or was the encounter real with officialdom covering up? Did the pilot fabricate his own disappearance? That is, land somewhere else with intentions of showing up later with claims of contact with other world beings, for the purpose of starting a new cult? One newsmen even made a strong suggestion that the whole affair was in some way related to pot running. If true why would the pilot attract world wide attention to himself if his intention was illegal? The only conclusion remaining after this suggestion is that it came from an incompetent reporter.

The suggestion that Federick Valentich took on sufficient fuel to take him further afield would apply to all pilots who fly from Moorabbin Airport, where almost all light aircraft tanks are kept topped up. Pilots take off with full tanks even though they merely fly the circuits for training and practice. There is also a report that this missing man said he was going to King Island for crayfish but had placed no order with fishermen there. I was particularly interested in that phase of the story and while in Currie, I deliberately waited until 8.00p.m., to check if crayfish could be secured without a prearranged order. Result—no problem—the fishermen can be located at the club bar only a few blocks away and are pleased to comply with any request. One remaining statement was that the airman made no request for King Island lights be turned on at airport for landing. That report came from officialdom and may or may not be true. The experience ufologists have had with officialdom around the world, is that all statements regarding UFOs coming from that source should be treated with a grain of salt.

Perhaps the most misleading attempt of the entire batch of suggestions was made to give the impression that the girl friend had made a rendezvous with the young airman. I spent a day and night at Appollo Bay, checking out that story, including visit to motels where fellow pilots and friends had stayed. The facts are, the friends were a normal group young men. The girl was accompanied with her parents, their purpose was to search for the missing pilot on this the nearest land from where he disappeared.

The pattern of world wide officialdom, when a UFO encounter receives wide publicity, is to first try to debunk the UFO to distract public attention from them. Failing that, the last resort held in reserve is to attack the witness and try to discredit his character. It is doubtful that a young man who volunteered his time and talents to the Flight Training Service, could be so discredited. My prediction is that this fatal encounter will go down in history as just one more example where the Ufologists must be equipped with high hip boots so they can wade through the official hog-wash to get at a few facts concerning the subject of unidentified flying objects.

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JAPANESE FAIL TO LURE U.F.O.'S - February 2nd 1978.

Tokyo (A.P.) An attempt to lure some U.F.O.'s within camera range by using red, white and blue spotlights and the sound track from the movie "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" ended in failure after the attempt was made by Nihon Shortwave Broadcasting Company on the eve of the screening in Japan of the hit movie. The colored lights were flashed from the roof of a building in Akasaka downtown Tokyo where transmitting station of the broadcasting company is located.

PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN OF FLYING SAUJER IN QUEBEC - March 14th 1978.

Montreal (Canadian Press) - Two Montrealers say they have taken photographs of an unidentified flying object hovering over a lake in the hills of La Verendrye Park about 320 kilometres northwest of Montreal. Jacques Lavoie 30 and Richard Huot 36 of nearby Ille Perrot say they were camping near lake Baskatong on the night of March 11th 1978, when a brightly glowing object hurtled out of the sky and sent them fleeing through the snow in terror. When it seemed to disappear, the two came back and found it near the lake, hovering silently over the water. Lavoie and Huot said the object appeared for about 30 seconds. They were able to capture 3 photographs all of which show the typical white disc confirmation.

ARGENTINE JUNGLE SWALLOWS UP U.F.O. - May 18th 1978.

BUENOS AIRES (A.P.) - A long cylindrical object fell to earth on May 6th 1978 and disappeared in dense jungle near the Argentine-Bolivian border according to many Argentine newspapers. The English-language Buenos Aires Herald, in a report from the border province of Salta 1,900 kilometres northwest of here said U.S. experts from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration arrived in the area 11 days later to begin to investigate the sighting. Witnesses in the sparsely populated border region inhabited mostly by Indians reported hearing an explosion as the object hit the ground. The paper, La Nacion, which usually avoids reports of unidentified flying objects that appear frequently in other Argentine newspapers carried an account of the sighting, and said that the Bolivian military government has declared the area where the object fell a "military emergency zone".

STAR TREK ACTOR DOUBTS U.F.O.'S - February 10th 1978

VERMILLION, SOUTH DAKOTA (United Press International)

In an interview given to reporter Michael J. Bugeja, actor James Doohan, better known as chief engineer 'Scotty' of the Star Ship Enterprise, is a skeptic when it comes to dealing with U.F.O.'s.

"The more scientists I talk to, the less I believe in U.F.O.'s" he said, "I think it's all an electrical display". Doohan, who is a master of dialects says he likes Bill Cosby's depiction of U.F.O.'s. "Deh oh-ways pic' on a body from the South....all li'l country folk". Then shifting to an Oxford accent, he added "They never pick anybody super intelligent, you know". Before Star Trek, Doohan said, people were frightened of visitors from outer space- "the Martians will get you, and all that". He said Star Trek was an education about possible aliens from other worlds - "it had a message".

The above were sent by W.Ritchie Benedict of Calagry, Alberta, Canada.

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PLANE VANISHES AFTER LOUD METALLIC NOISE

A massive sea and air search was continuing last night for a light aircraft which vanished over Bass Strait seconds after the pilot reported he was being followed by an unidentified flying object. The pilot, Mr. Frederick Valentich, 20, of Avondale Heights, a Melbourne suburb was on a flight from Melbourne to King Island on Saturday night when radio was lost at 7.12pm.

The plane, a \$43,000 single-engined Cessna 182, is owned by Southern Air Services, of Moorabbin. Only the pilot was on board. In his last minutes of radio contact near Cape Otway Mr. Valentich told Melbourne control he was being followed by a large aircraft with four bright lights travelling at high speed.

The Department of Transport last night released the following tape recording of the ground-air conversation between Melbourne Flight Service and the missing aircraft.

This is the transcript:

7.06: Pilot asked Melbourne Flight Service Unit whether there was any known aircraft in the area below 5000ft.

Flight Service Unit: No known traffic.

Aircraft: Seems to be large aircraft below 5000ft.

FSU: What type of aircraft?

Aircraft: I can't confirm. It has four bright lights. Appear to be landing lights. Aircraft has just passed over me about 1000ft above.

FSU: Is large aircraft confirmed?

Aircraft: Affirmative. At the speed its travelling, are there any RAAF aircraft in the vicinity?

FSU: Negative.

'ITS NOT AN AIRCRAFT'

7.08pm. Aircraft: Melbourne. its approaching from due east toward me. It seems to be playing some sort of game. Flying at a speed I cannot estimate.

FSU: What is your altitude?

Aircraft: 4500ft.

FSU: Can you confirm you can't identify aircraft?

Aircraft: Affirmative.

7.09pm. Aircraft. It's not an aircraft. Its....(break in transmission)

FSU: Can you describe aircraft?

Aircraft: It is flying past. It is a long shape. Cannot identify more than that. Coming for me now. It seems to be stationary. I'm orbiting and the thing is orbiting on top of me also. It has a green Light and sort of metallic light on the outside.

Aircraft then said the object vanished.

FSU: Confirm it has vanished.

Aircraft: Do you know what sort of aircraft I've got? Is it military?

FSU: No. No military traffic in the area.

7.12pm. Aircraft: Engine is rough idling and is coughing.

FSU: What are your intentions?

Aircraft: Proceeding to King Island. Unknown aircraft now hovering over me.

FSU: Acknowledged that message.

There was a long metallic noise on the radio and contact with the aircraft was lost.

Light aircraft began a visual and radio search when the plane failed to turn up at King Island on arrival time of 7.28pm.

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An RAAF Orion from Edinburgh, South Australia-a long range maritime reconnaissance aircraft-spent all day yesterday searching the area off Cape Ottway where the plane disappeared. The pilot later reported having seen an oil slick in the area.

The slick however, lying about 18 miles north of King Island is believed to be too widespread to have come from a light aircraft. Tests will be made today to determine whether it is oil or fuel. But the rescue co-ordination centre conducting the search from Melbourne remains mystified by the disappearance.

Conditions on Saturday night and all day yesterday were ideal, with fine weather, a mild north-westerly breeze and almost unlimited visibility.

The missing aircraft was carrying a lifejacket and a "black box" radio survival beacon transmitting on a high distress frequency. The Australian Coastal Surveillance Organisation in Canberra has alerted all shipping and three crayfish boats equipped with radio are working their way up the west coast of King Island and toward Cape Ottway on the Cessna's flight path.

A thorough land search of Cape Ottway and King Island has failed to find any trace of the aircraft.

CREDIBILITY OF UFO SIGHTINGS INCREASED.

Many King Islanders are this week attaching credibility to reports of recent sightings of unidentified flying objects by private correspondents to "The King Island News" in what they regard as unsatisfactory explanations so far offered by the Department of Transport and the Civil Aviation.

Most members of the public who have ~~been~~ contacted the "News" refuse to accept official explanations for the disappearance of Mr. Frederick Valentich and his aircraft on Saturday night between Cape Ottway and Cape Wickham at twilight in conditions which were described as near perfect, as the product of hallucinations.

Credence is given to the view that Mr. Valentich's description of an unidentified aircraft prior to losing radio contact with the air traffic controllers is one of the best documented and most reportedly backed stories in the history of UFO sightings and experience.

A leader in the "Australian" on Monday said "there is something hair-prickling about the pilot's recorded dialogue with the Melbourne Flight Service which must raise doubts in the minds of the most confirmed UFO cynics".

First UFO reports received by the "News" in recent weeks was from a correspondent who wished to remain anonymous "for the moment", but requested publication of his letter in the hopes that he might bring forward corroborating reports from other sources.

The correspondent described a number of incidences over a two month period in which a slow moving object with a light had followed a vehicle down the North Road into Currie, and then disappeared towards the lighthouse.

The correspondent claimed other sightings had been made in Currie on the same night; others "further up North" had seen strange light passing over their house, but when they had gone to investigate, the light suddenly disappeared.

On September 12th according to the correspondent, a strange light appeared near Camp Creek, which "seemed to light up the area as if daylight". The strange vehicle was reportedly oval shape, the same description given by Mr. George Newman and his sons Peter and Neil, relating an experience they had at approximately 9-30pm on September.

The party was returning from a shooting trip when whilst travelling along the Reekar School straight a "bright white light in an oval shape" began to follow them. It then disappeared towards

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the sea when they reached the butter factory.

According to Mr. Newman's report, the object then with a weaker light reappeared near Seaview and continued towards Currie.

Enquiries at the "News" office make it clear that the public is not prepared to be "fobbed off with the jargon of officialdom". Many believe that the authorities are failing to disclose all that is known. To quote "The Australian" we are not suggesting that we should fly into a flurry about little green men and the like - but we do suggest it is perhaps time mankind made up its collective mind whether it will welcome or seek to repel visitors from space, and this question may indeed be most relevant to King Islanders.

However, mystery still surrounds the original objectives of Mr. Valentich and his plane on that fateful Saturday evening.

MISSING PILOT TAPES KEPT UNDER WRAPS.

The Department of Transport is refusing to release its tape recording of missing pilot Frederick Valentich's description of his confrontation with a UFO.

A wide search has failed to find any trace of Valentich or the single-engined aircraft in which he disappeared over Bass Strait after describing a UFO.

A spokesman for the Minister for Transport, Mr. Nixon, yesterday agreed that the department had already taken extraordinary action by releasing a transcript part of Valentich's last conversation. But he said there was no possibility of the Press listening to the recording, even confidentially.

"We feel that air safety investigators can probably come to better conclusions than the Press, the spokesman from Canberra said."

Australian UFO Bulletin is produced by the Victorian UFO Research Society, P.O. Box 43, Moorabbin 3189 Victoria, Australia. a non profit organisation dedicated to the objective investigation of the UFO phenomenon. The Society welcomes eye-witness accounts, and any information concerning the observation of unidentified flying objects and unusual aerial phenomena.

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